University Senate Minutes

20 November 2013

Midtown Student Center room 201

Meeting convened at 3:30PM

Members present: Barrett, Boriss, Clements, Dabros, Delcourt, Donegan, Eisenson, Ferguson, Goble, Harris, Hayes, Huang, Ivanov, Koza, Lupinacci, Boily, Morris, Moser, Murray, O’Brien, Rosenthal, Schlicht, Secondo, Skar, Spencer, Petkanas, Tom, Trapani

Guests present: Alexander, Aloni, Assenza, Atkinson, Barone, Begian, Betts, Collar, Cratty, Cronin, Cruz, Dechiaro, Dennis, Gladstone, Gustafson, Hirshfield, Jazwiecki, Kenausis, Khoo, Kuther, Lanier, Maskel, Nair, Nelson, Reis, Ryan Skiba, Stevens, Usekes, Warren, Wright

3:30-3:55 Meeting with Dr. Gray

Senator Koza called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm and suspended regular meeting procedures in order to continue the conversation with Dr. Gray that began in the meeting at 2:15 pm with faculty, staff, and students.

President Schmotter introduced Dr. Gray to the senate. Dr. Schmotter noted that this was Dr. Gray’s first senate meeting at the 17 institutions he visited, thanks to Dr. Koza’s initiative, and underscored that the planning process is still ongoing and that there will be “ample opportunity” for all of us to provide input to this process.

Dr. Gray thanked the senate for the invitation and stated that his time would be short (with the senate, not with ConnSCU) due to the need to prepare for the BOR meeting the following morning (11/21). He remarked that he anticipates being able to visit each of the 17 campuses at least every other year. “I want to be a team player.”

Dr. Gray outlined his intent to “move the academic agenda forward” with a collective plan to engage all three systems: Community Colleges, Charter Oak, and CSUS. He noted that this plan will require tremendous effort to be complete by May-June 2014.

Dr. Gray mentioned that he understands Western’s strength to include programs in meteorology and JLA. He remarked that he visited the VPA building prior to the meeting and was impressed.

Building on the previous meeting’s discussion regarding online education, Dr. Gray stated that he would work with a consultant and “some of you” to decide “where we want to go with Charter Oak.”

Dr. Gray shared that he was pleased to interact with faculty and students during the day, having lunch with students, which he enjoys the most because students keep us young. He said that he even enjoys working with faculty and concluded that we have the opportunity and challenge to create and develop a new system.
Questions and answers:

1. Dr. Maskel asked about centralizing online courses and redundancies. Naugatuck Valley Community College has a branch in Danbury that they are seeking to expand. “If you don’t want to duplicate online courses, why do we want to duplicate NVCC courses that are already offered at Western?”

   Dr. Gray responded with an example from Norwalk Community College. Their RN graduates are not finding jobs. He wants to focus on transfer from CC’s to the CSUS.

2. Senator Rosenthal spoke to Dr. Gray’s previous references to SUNY as a potential model and shared his experience teaching for five years in the SUNY system (SUNY-Oneonta) and participating in SUNY senate meetings. He stated that he was “incredulous” at SUNY as a model given his experience and that he has found it easier to “get things done” at Western that he could not in SUNY.

   Dr. Gray agreed and stated that he received a similar reaction from some “folks” he sent to Albany to look at the model. When they returned, “they mentioned that there are things we do better.” However, he also stated that SUNY has put “64 units together” in a way only Minnesota and a few other states have.

3. Ms. Kenausis sought feedback on the vision for CSUS as part of the new plan. She stated that his vision for Community Colleges is clear, and Charter Oak is clear, but the role of CSUS is less clear. “Are you waiting for our feedback? What is your vision?”

   Dr. Gray replied that he is still waiting for feedback from the presidents of the four CSUS. He is interested in combining marketing efforts, a common app, transfer and articulation agreements, and enrollment strategies. He mentioned that Western had some good initiatives for enrollment and that President Schmotter would provide feedback based on WCSU’s strategic plan.

4. Dr. Gustafson asked about the document plan for CSUS that Dr. Gray denied writing (from the previous meeting) and stated that she has heard many concerns from faculty that Western could become a school of the Arts.

   Dr. Gray repeated that he had not read the document and that the Hartford Courant had asked him about it that morning. He said that he was “very disturbed” and that he did not read it.

5. Dr. Cronin asked a question about the role of UCONN.

   Dr. Gray replied that “we will always be sibling rivals with UCONN.” He said that he thought UCONN would get “hung up” about us because 80% of our graduates stay in CT and this and other arguments will secure more funding for ConnSCU from the state. He remarked that the legislators need to be informed and that we need to have a dialogue with UCONN on collaboration although there will always be competition for state funding.

Dr. Gray’s meeting with the senate ended at 3:55 pm.
Senate Meeting convened at 3:55PM

I. Minutes
   a. Moved to December

II. Announcements
   a. Moved to December

III. Unfinished Business
   a. None

IV. New Business
   a. Make Up Examination Policy for Catalog *
      
      Motions:
      Motion to approve the Make Up Examination Policy (Barret/Goble)
      Motion to suspend the rule (Skar/Goble: 9/4/9).

      Motion does not pass because the voting members did not constitute a quorum.

      Revisit next month.

V. EdD in Nursing Education Program Policies *

      Senator Lupinacci addressed the admissions policy and noted that amendments have been made to the document distributed to senators.

      Revisit next month in anticipation of the new document uploaded to Sharepoint.

VI. Discussion on Senate Meeting with Dr. Gray

      Senator Koza reviewed the timeline for input to the ConnSCU plan. In early December, the four CSU presidents will send their recommendations to President Núñez regarding their vision. By February 5th Núñez’s plan will probably be finalized and given to Governor Malloy for release to the state.

      Senator Skar summarized the points from the response that senate leadership and leaders from senate standing committees are in the process of drafting: 1) the importance and impact of Western in our region; 2) the preparation of students with 21st century skills to be successful after graduation, such as problem solving, communication, an ability to collaborate with others, etc.; and 3) the importance of a comprehensive university with breadth and depth of programs (a universe). She suggested adding at least one more point regarding online education and invited all feedback from senators and others for this document.

      Senator Koza reiterated the need to draft a response for Dr. Gray and has called a special senate meeting for January 15, 2014. Senator Delcourt asked about the four points and Senator Skar responded that there could be more. Senator Barrett commented that the draft document is not yet ready for release.
Senator Clements asked that the “Dear Senator’s” letter regarding the January meeting be sent by email, and Senator O’Brien stated that the response needs to be ready by the first week in December.

Senator Koza said that we have to draft a response no later than Wednesday of next week. Senator Rosenthal noted that Southern’s response had a nice statement regarding the problem of the time crunch, that these things get done too quickly and that is why they often go wrong. Our letter should have a similar component. We need to include a protest regarding the timeline.

Initial reactions to Dr. Gray’s visit:

- Senator Murray stated that she had very politely asked a question about the 2013-2016 Strategic Initiatives Connecticut State Universities October 2013 document at the 2:15 pm meeting with faculty, staff, and students. She wants to know who wrote this. Who sent it?

- President Koza clarified that Dr. Schmotter released this upon request because two other CSU presidents had already released it. She noted that there is nothing secret in that document. We can focus on the content, which is available in other sources. Dr. Schmotter wrote a revision to the last page of the document.

- Provost Gates offered additional clarity noting that it is true that Dr. Gray had never seen this document. Dr. Gray was asked by the governor to develop a plan. No plan had been developed. At the system level, the presidents were asked to brainstorm to give input to the plan. This document was based on that. One of the system’s presidents released the document prematurely. It was released first at Central by President Miller. Provost Gates stated that she approached the president to say that it should be sent out here at Western as well. Provost Gates asked the deans to send this out to department chairs to get feedback. She remarked that while the outcome is a good thing. Faculty members are now engaged for how to give input in the planning process. It was a draft and not meant to represent the official plan.

- President Koza suggested that we not look at specific documents and that we address the information we have for our response.

- Senator Rosenthal shared the outcome of his department quick straw poll, including history student majors, which suggests not a lot of excitement regarding this plan.

- Senator Lupinacci asked for confirmation on the timeline.

- President Koza pointed to the ExcelCT 2-page document, which clarifies late spring as the deadline.

- Senator Murray said that she was “deeply disturbed” by the comment in the document that AAUP and SUOAF are impediments to ConnSCU. NOTE: The point raised by Dr. Murphy is located on Page 2, bullet point 6 under the heading “Forces that Drive State University Planning and Operations” (“2013-2016 Strategic Initiatives, Connecticut State Universities, October 2013”) “Constraint to change and agility implicit in Collective Bargaining Agreements (especially AAUP and SUOAF)”

- Senator Boily also expressed concern about focus on unions as a problem.

- Senator Boriss responded that she took this as related to raises, etc. in CBA’s.
• Senator Koza will ask Patty O’Neil and Esther Boriss to formulate a question for Dr. Gray to respond to any concerns with the unions. Senator Koza asked for anything positive from the meeting to add to a response.

• Senator Skar stated that student voices were very powerful in the earlier meeting and positively reflected their connections with faculty and the institution.

• Senator Clements expressed concern that CSUS could become a senior vocational college. Dr. Gray did not mention any other graduate program besides teacher education.

• Senator Borris noted that Dr. Gray has a vision for the 12 Community colleges.

• Senator Secondo stated that she had the impression that Dr. Gray was holding back and not forthcoming.

• Senator Trapani stated that he did not see how the plan would be successful without faculty as part of the process. He added that it is vague and scary to hear that “we are creating a brand new system.” WCSU was founded in 1903 and has a long history.

• Senator Rosenthal remarked that the comment that the crisis of the last 10 years led to the creation of a new system is false. He suggested that Dr. Gray is bullying through a plan that is not genuine.

• Senator Koza added that Dr. Gray’s focus on teacher education has left out the entire business school.

• Senator Rosenthal noted that we are going to have a “consultant” for Charter Oak, which is expensive. Although there is talk about efficiencies, there is a plan to pay for a private consultant.

• Senator Koza suggested that maybe Charter Oak could be a resource. They do not have to be a competitor if there are ways to use them creatively, such as tech support.

• Senator Skar added concern regarding the “streamlining of courses” in liberal arts that are the foundation of a 4-year degree. Dr. Gray proposed the same syllabus across campuses and suggested that we define how our liberal arts core is unique from other campuses.

• Senator Trapani remarked that WCSU has changed a lot the over 20 years he has been here and that it has become distinctive in many ways, such as increasing in research. WCSU changed its past reputation as a “glorified high school to the community” and suggested that we need to clarify our identity so that ConnSCU does not undo the advances over the past decades.

• Senator Koza noted the importance of WCSU in the region and economic impact statement from 2011 with another report coming out soon. She also stated that the business school is different from rest of the university. The business core is protected because students cannot transfer community college courses. Moreover, the major in marketing at Western is unique from the major in marketing at Southern.

• Dr. Whittemore pointed out that Dr. Gray talked about the “grief” of the BOR for two years. He commented that this was “strange” given that the BOR is made up of people who are here temporarily before they move on in their career goals. He asked how their suffering supersedes the fact that as professors we are here permanently committed to a community at our institution and within our disciplines and professions.

• Senator Koza suggested that we invite as many people from Hartford as we can to campus. She stated that she recently met Nicolas Donofrio at a dinner with NEASC and the BOR, his first time on campus. She invited him to give a talk in her MBA course because of his experience with IBM. She said this was an excellent experience that should be repeated so that people will get to know us and understand who we are.
• Senator Goble commented that the comprehensive self-study process for NEASC could inform our written response, as well as narrative from the Strategic Plan. Both are online.

• Dean House suggested that we revisit Charter Oak’s potential in order to help shape and influence the plan, which is still not entirely defined.

• Senator Koza invited participation in the draft document to define what makes WCSU distinct.

Meeting adjourned at 5:02.